Phasing-out subsidies on Petroleum pruducts

421. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGAR WALLA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that subsidies on petroleum products are proposed to be phased out;

(b) if so, product-wise average cost, price and subsidies, togetherwith the time span and manner in which subsidies are to be phased out;

(c) what is the mechanism to ensure cost efficiencies for subsidiesed products produced under monopolistic/ oligopolistic situation and cost plus formula; and

(d) what cost economies have been achieved on subsidised products during the last five years, and impact of such economics on prices of each of subsidised products?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The cost of production of petroleum products would vary from refinery to refinery depending on the level of crude thruput, pattern of production, delivered cost of crude oil, cost of processing/refining and return on capital employed. The Government on 1.9.1997 have decided in principle to dismantle APM by introducing reforms in a phased manner based on the recommendations of the 'R' Group. Pricing of major petroleum products including HSD would be on import parity basis. The subsidy on LPG will be eliminated over a period of 24 months which would bring LPG prices to import parity at the end of the period. In the medium run, all petroleum products will be priced at import parity, except for Kerosene, the subsidy on which will be covered by additional realisation on Motor Spirit.

(c) and (d) Continuous efforts are made for ensuring cost control and economy in expenditure by fixation of standard/norms and monitoring the actual performance vis-a-vis norms for corrective action. There is an inbuilt system of providing incentives/ disincentives to the oil companies to reduce their cost of production and only the normative costs of the refineries are reimbursed.

Fire at Visakhapattnam Refinery

422. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:
SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI:
SHRI S.M. KRISHNA:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to slate:

(a) the details of the loss incurred to human beings and property by the devastating fire that occurred at the Vishakpattnam refinery on August 24, 1997;

(b) whether any enquiry has been conducted into the causes of the fire; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) The fire accident in HPCL's Vizag Refinery/Marketing Terminal, on 14th September, 1997 has resulted in the death of 60 persons, injuries to 10, and financial loss of about Rs. 80 crore. The Government have set up a Commission under Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952, to enquire into the accident. The Commission has been asked to submit its Report within a period of three months.

Assam Government's demand for Higher Royalty

423. SHRI K.M. SAIFULLAH: Will the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Assam

have demanded a higher royalty on oil extracted in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Central Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL.GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) For the block period 1996-99, Government of Assam has demanded royalty on crude oil at the rate of Rs. 1204/- per metric tonne as against the present 'on account' rate of Rs. 578/- per metric tonne.

(c) In view of the changed environment and the need to provide for a transparent and reasonable methodology for fixation of rates of royalty on crude oil payable to the State Governments, certain amendments to the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948 are considered necessary.

Rise in accidents at level crossings

424. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAM-BHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that level crossing accidents have lately been increasing;

(b) if so, the number, details and casualties involved in each during each of the three quarters in 1997-98 (so far); and

(c) what steps have been and are being taken to prevent and curb the accidents including manning and mechanising of level crossing and providing rail over-bridges; indicating the Eighth Plan targets and achievements and provisions for it under Ninth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The number of level crossing accidents on Indian Railways during April to October, 1997 was 36 as compared to 38 during corresponding period of last year. Casualties in level crossing accidents during 1997-98 are as under:

Period	Killed	Injured
Apr.-June '97	32	13
July-Sept: '97	17	78
October '97	17	26

(c) The sensitive unmanned level crossings will be, on a planned basis, after due prioritisation, converted into manned level crossing with the help of the State Govts, who have to invest the initial capital cost.

Railways construct Road over/Under bridges in lieu of existing busy level crossings i.e. having a traffic density of 100000 or more Train Vehicle Units. However, wherever the proposals are sponsored by the State Govts, or local authorities for replacement of a level crossing having lesser traffic units, they arc also considered for replacement on deposit terms for which the entire cost of the construction and recurring maintenance are borne by the sponsoring body. Census on the level crossings are conducted every five years and when the level crossings are found busy i.e. having attained 100000 or more TVUs, they are considered for replacement with Road over/Under Bridges on cost sharing basis. Hence, no specific target in any particular plan is kept in this respect, but efforts are made to include maximum busy crossings proposed by State Govts.

Rail accidents

425. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PAT-NAIK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rail accidents are on the increase;

(b) if so, the number of rail accidents that have taken place between 1st July, 1996 and 31st October, 1997 (date-wise and train-routc-wise);